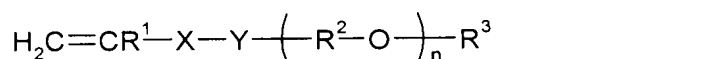


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A copolymer which comprises, in copolymerized form,

- (A) 60 to 99% by weight of at least one monoethylenically unsaturated polyalkylene oxide monomer of the formula I



in which the variables have the following meanings:

X is -CH₂- or -CO-, if Y is -O-;

is -CO-, if Y is -NH-;

Y is -O- or -NH-;

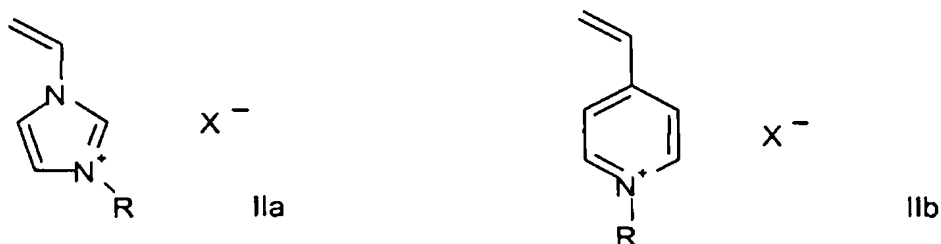
R¹ is hydrogen or methyl;

R² are identical or different C₂-C₆-alkylene radicals, which may be arranged blockwise or randomly;

R³ is hydrogen or C₁-C₄-alkyl;

n is an integer from 3 to 50,

- (B) 1 to 40% by weight of at least one quaternized nitrogen-containing mono-ethylenically unsaturated monomer of the formula IIa or IIb



in which the variables have the following meanings:

R is C₁-C₄-alkyl or benzyl;

X- is halide, C₁-C₄-alkyl sulfate, C₁-C₄-alkylsulfonate or C₁-C₄-alkyl carbonate,

(C) 0 to 39% by weight of anionic monoethylenically unsaturated monomers and

(D) 0 to 30% by weight of other nonionic monoethylenically unsaturated
monomers

and has an average molecular weight M_w of from 2000 to 100 000.

Claim 2 (Original): The copolymer according to claim 1, which comprises, in copolymerized form, as monomer (A), at least one monomer of the formula I in which the variables have the following meanings:

X is -CO- or -CH₂-;

Y is -O-;

R¹ is hydrogen or methyl;

R² is ethylene, propylene or mixtures thereof;

R³ is methyl;

n is an integer from 5 to 30.

Claim 3 (Canceled):

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The copolymer according to claim 1, which comprises, in copolymerized form, 60 to 98% by weight of monomer (A), 1 to 39% by weight of monomer (B) and 1 to 39% by weight of monomer (C).

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The copolymer according to claim 1, in which the weight ratio of (A) to (B) is $\geq 2:1$ and for the case where the copolymers comprise a monomer (C) in copolymerized form, the weight ratio of (A) to (C) is also $\geq 2:1$.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): ~~[[The]]~~ A method of using a copolymer copolymers according to claim 1 as dispersants for a clay mineral minerals, comprising: adding the copolymer of claim 1 to an aqueous dispersion of a clay mineral.

Claim 7 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the monomer (A) is i) a reaction product of (meth)acrylic acid with polyalkylene glycol which is not terminally capped, terminally capped at one end by alkyl radicals, aminated at one end or terminally capped at one end by alkyl radicals and aminated at one end; or ii) alkyl ether of polyalkylene glycol which is not terminally capped or terminally capped at one end by alkyl, phenyl or alkylphenyl radicals.

Claim 8 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein monomer (B) has formula IIa.

Claim 9 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein monomer (A) is methylpolyethylene glycol (meth)acrylate, methylpolyethylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, methylpolypropylene glycol (meth)acrylate, methylpolypropylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, methylpolybutylene glycol (meth)acrylate, methylpolybutylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, methylpoly(propylene oxide-co-ethylene oxide) (meth)acrylate, methylpoly(propylene oxide-co-ethylene oxide) (meth)acrylamide, ethylpolyethylene glycol (meth)acrylate, ethylpolyethylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, ethylpolypropylene glycol (meth)acrylate, ethylpolypropylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, ethylpolybutylene glycol (meth)acrylate, ethylpolybutylene glycol (meth)acrylamide, ethylpoly(propylene oxide-co-ethylene oxide) (meth)acrylate, or ethylpoly(propylene oxide-co-ethylene oxide) (meth)acrylamide, each with 3 to 50 alkylene oxide units.

Claim 10 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the proportion of monomer (A) in the copolymer is 65 to 90% by weight.

Claim 11 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein monomer (B) has formula IIb.

Claim 12 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the amount of monomer (B) is 3 to 30% by weight.

Claim 13 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein component C) is present.

Claim 14 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein component D) is present.

Claim 15 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein monomer (C) is present and is an α,β -unsaturated monocarboxylic acid, an unsaturated dicarboxylic acid, an ethylenically unsaturated sulfonic acid, an ethylenically unsaturated phosphonic acid, or an acidic phosphate esters of C₂-C₄-alkylene glycol mono(meth)acrylates and poly(C₂-C₄-alkylene) glycol mono(meth)acrylates.

Claim 16 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the anionic monomer (C) is present in the form of a free acid or in salt form.

Claim 17 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein monomer (C) is present and is acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, maleic acid, vinylsulfonic acid, 2-(meth)acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or vinylphosphonic acid.

Claim 18 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the proportion of the monomer (C) in the copolymers is from 3 to 30% by weight.

Claim 19 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, wherein the monomer D) is present and is methyl (meth)acrylate, ethyl (meth)acrylate, (meth)acryl-amide, vinyl acetate, vinyl propionate, vinyl methyl ether, N-vinylformamide, N-vinylpyrrolidone or N-vinylcaprolactam.

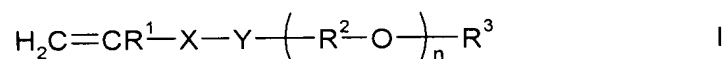
Claim 20 (New): The copolymer according to claim 1, having an average molecular weight Mw of from 3000 to 25 000.

Claim 21 (New): A method of using a copolymer as dispersants for a clay mineral, comprising:

adding the copolymer to an aqueous dispersion of a clay mineral;

wherein said copolymer which comprises, in copolymerized form,

(A) 60 to 99% by weight of at least one monoethylenically unsaturated polyalkylene oxide monomer of the formula I



in which the variables have the following meanings:

X is -CH₂- or -CO-, if Y is -O-;

is -CO-, if Y is -NH-;

Y is -O- or -NH-;

R¹ is hydrogen or methyl;

R² are identical or different C₂-C₆-alkylene radicals, which may be arranged blockwise or randomly;

R³ is hydrogen or C₁-C₄-alkyl;

n is an integer from 3 to 50,

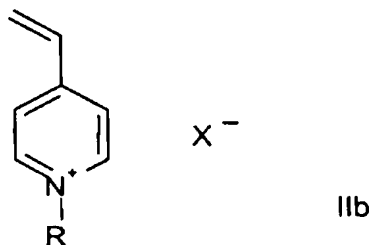
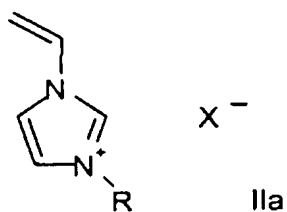
(B) 1 to 40% by weight of at least one quaternized nitrogen-containing monoethylenically unsaturated monomer,

(C) 0 to 39% by weight of anionic monoethylenically unsaturated monomers and

(D) 0 to 30% by weight of other nonionic monoethylenically unsaturated monomers

and has an average molecular weight M_w of from 2000 to 100 000.

Claim 22 (New): The method of claim 21, wherein the copolymer comprises, in copolymerized form, as monomer (B) at least one monomer of the formula IIa or IIb



in which the variables have the following meanings:

R is C_1 - C_4 -alkyl or benzyl;

X- is halide, C_1 - C_4 -alkyl sulfate, C_1 - C_4 -alkylsulfonate or C_1 - C_4 -alkyl carbonate.